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**The
Holladay
Case**

A Mystery
Of Two
Continents

By
BURTON E. STEVENSON

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"Very happy; yes, sir. They were just like lovers, sir, until her death. They seemed just made for each other, sir," and the trite old saying gathered a new dignity as he uttered it.

I paused a moment to consider. This, certainly, seemed to discredit the theory that Holladay had ever had a liaison with any other woman, and yet what other theory was tenable?

"There was nothing to mar their happiness that you know of? Of course," I added, "you understand, Thompson, that I'm not asking these questions from idle curiosity, but to get to the bottom of this mystery if possible."

"I understand, sir," he nodded. "No, there was nothing to mar their happiness—except one thing."

"And what was that?"

"Why, they had no children, sir, for fifteen years and more. After Miss Frances came, of course that was all changed."

"She was born abroad?"

"Yes, sir; in France. I don't just know the town."

"But you know the date of her birth?"

"Oh, yes, sir—the 10th of June, 1876. We always celebrated it."

"Mr. Holladay was with his wife at the time?"

"Yes, sir. He and his wife had been abroad nearly a year. His health had broken down, and the doctor made him take a long vacation. He came home a few months later, but Mrs. Holladay stayed on. She didn't get strong again, some way. She stayed nearly four years, and he went over every few months to spend a week with her, and at last she came home to die, bringing her child with her. That was the first time any of us ever saw Miss Frances."

"Mr. Holladay thought a great deal of her?"

"You may well say so, sir. She took his wife's place," said the old man simply.

"And she thought a great deal of him?"

"More than that, sir. She fairly worshipped him. She was always at the door to meet him; always dined with him; they almost always spent their evenings together. She didn't care much for society. I've often heard her tell him that she'd much rather just stay at home with him. It was he who rather insisted on her going out, for he was proud of her, as he'd a right to be."

"Yes," I said, for all this fitted in exactly with what I had always heard about the family. "There were no other relatives, were there?"

"None at all, sir. Both Mr. Holladay and his wife were only children. Their parents, of course, have been dead for years."

"Nor any intimate friends?"

"None I'd call intimate, sir. Miss Frances had some school friends, but she was always well-reserved, sir."

"Yes," I nodded again. "And now," I added, "tell me, as fully as you can, what has happened within the last three weeks."

"Well, sir," he began slowly, "after her father's death she seemed quite depressed and quite unwell."

the house, sat in the library or evenings, ate scarcely anything. Then Mr. Royce got to coming to the house, and she brightened up, and we all hoped she'd soon be all right again. Then she seemed to get worse of a sudden and sent us all away to get Belair ready. I got the place in order, sir, and telegraphed her that we were ready. She answered that she'd come in a few days. Ten days ago the rest of the servants came, and I looked for her every day, but she didn't come. I telegraphed her again, but she didn't answer, and finally I got so uneasy, sir, I couldn't rest, and came back to the city to see what was the matter. I got here early this morning and went right to the house. Thomas, the second butler, had been left in charge, and he told me that Miss Frances and her maid had started for Belair the same day the servants did. That's all I know."

"Then she's been gone ten days?" I questioned.

"Ten days; yes, sir."

Ten days! What might not have happened in that time! Dr. Jenkinson's theory of dementia recurred to me, and I was more than ever inclined to credit it. How else explain this flight? I could see from Mr. Royce's face how absolutely nonplused he was.

"Well," I said at last, for want of something better, "we'll go with you to the house and see the man in charge there. Perhaps he can tell us something more."

But he could tell us very little. Ten days before a carriage had driven up to the door. Miss Holladay and her maid had entered it and been driven away. The carriage had been called, he thought, from some neighboring stable, as the family coachman had been sent away with the other servants. They had driven down the avenue toward Thirty-fourth street, where he supposed they were going to the Long Island station. We looked through the house; it was in perfect order. Miss Holladay's rooms were just as she would naturally have left them. Her father's rooms, too, were evidently undisturbed.

"Here's one thing," I said, "that might help, and I picked up a photograph from the mantel. 'You won't mind my using it?'"

Mr. Royce took it with trembling hand and gazed at it for a moment—at the dark eyes, the earnest mouth. Then he handed it back to me.

"No," he answered, "not if it will really help. We must use every means we can. Only—"

"I won't use it unless I absolutely have to," I assured him. "And when I'm done with it I'll destroy it."

"Very well," he assented, and I put it in my pocket.

There was nothing more to be discovered there, and we went away, after warning the two men to say not a word to any one concerning their mistress' disappearance.

Plainly the first thing to be done was to find the coachman who had driven Miss Holladay and her maid away from the house, and with this end in view we visited all the stables in the neighborhood, but from none of

them had a carriage been ordered by her. Had she ordered it herself from a stable in some distant portion of the city for the purpose of concealing her whereabouts, or had it been ordered for her by her maid, and was she really the victim of foul play? I put this question to Mr. Royce, but he seemed quite unable to reach a conclusion. As for myself, I was certain that she had gone away of her own accord and had deliberately planned her disappearance. Why? Well, I began to suspect that we had not yet really touched the bottom of the mystery.

We drove back to the office and found Mr. Graham there. I related to him the circumstances of our search and submitted to him and to our junior one question for immediate settlement.

"At the best, it's a delicate case," I pointed out. "Miss Holladay has plainly laid her plans very carefully to prevent us following her. It may be difficult to prove that she has not gone away entirely of her own accord. She certainly has a perfect right to go wherever she wishes without consulting us. Have we the right to follow her against her evident desire?"

For a moment Mr. Graham did not answer, but sat tapping his desk with that deep line of perplexity between his eyebrows. Then he nodded emphatically.

"It's our duty to follow her and find her," he said. "It's perfectly evident to me that no girl in her right mind would act as she has done. She had no reason whatever for deceiving us—for running away. We wouldn't have interfered with her. Jenkinson's right—she's suffering with dementia. We must see that she receives proper medical treatment."

"It might not be dementia," I suggested, "so much as undue influence—on the part of the new maid, perhaps."

"Then it's our duty to rescue her from that influence," rejoined Mr. Graham, "and restore her to her normal mentality."

"Even if we offend her?"

"We can't stop to think of that. Besides, she won't be offended when she comes to herself. The question is how to find her most speedily."

"The police, probably, could do it most speedily," I said, "but since she can be in no immediate danger of any kind I rather doubt whether it would be wise to call in the police. Miss Holladay would very properly resent any more publicity."

"But," objected Mr. Graham, "if we don't call in the police, how are we to find her? I recognize, of course, how undesirable it is that she should be subjected to any further notoriety, but is there any other way?"

I glanced at Mr. Royce and saw that he was seemingly sunk in apathy.

"If I could be excused from the office for a few days, sir," I began hesitatingly, "I might be able to find some trace of her. If I'm unsuccessful,

we might then call in the authorities."

Mr. Royce brightened up for a moment.

"That's it," he said. "Let Lester look into it."

"Very well," assented Mr. Graham. "I agree to that. Of course any expense you may incur will be borne by the office."

"Thank you, sir," and I rose with fast beating heart, for the adventure appealed to me strongly. "I'll begin at once then. I should like assistance in one thing. Could you let me have three or four clerks to visit the various stables of the city? It would be best, I think, to use our own people."

"Certainly," assented our senior instantly. "I'll call them in and we can give them their instructions at once."

So four clerks were summoned, and each was given a district of the city. Their instructions were to find from which stable Miss Holladay had ordered a carriage on the morning of Thursday, April 3. They were to report at the office every day, noon and evening, until the search was finished. They started away at once, and I turned to follow them, when my eye was caught by the expression of our junior's face.

"Mr. Royce is ill, sir!" I cried. "Look at him!"

He was leaning forward heavily, his face drawn and livid, his eyes set, his hands plucking at the arms of his chair. We sprang to him and led him to a couch. I bathed his hands and face in cold water, while Mr. Graham hurriedly summoned a physician. The doctor soon arrived and diagnosed the case at a glance.

"Nervous breakdown," he said tersely. "You lawyers drive yourselves too hard. It's a wonder to me you don't all drop over. We'll have to look out or this will end in brain fever."

He poured out a stimulant, which the sick man swallowed without protest. He seemed stronger in a few moments and began talking incoherently to himself. We got him down to the doctor's carriage and drove rapidly to his lodgings, where we put him to bed without delay.

"I think he'll pull through," observed the doctor after watching him for awhile. "I'll get a couple of nurses, and we'll give him every chance. Has he any relatives here in New York?"

"No; his relatives are all in Ohio. Had they better be notified?"

"Oh, I think not—not unless he gets worse. He seems to be naturally strong. I suppose he's been worrying about something?"

"Yes," I said. "He has been greatly worried by one of his cases."

"Of course," he nodded. "If the human race had sense enough to stop worrying there'd be mighty little work for us doctors."

"I'd like to call Dr. Jenkinson into the case," I said. "He knows Mr. Royce and may be of help."

"Certainly. I'll be glad to consult with Dr. Jenkinson."

(To be Continued.)

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